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MATERIAL BENEFITS

With its clever use of luxurious textures and finishes, Irish interior designer Bryan O'Sullivan's latest project – a London townhouse owned by longstanding clients – is a feast for the senses



ENTRANCE HALL Focus Ceramics made the Portland stone floor. A bespoke mirror from Rupert Bevan reflects an iron and leather stool from Cox London. A painting by Louis Le Brocquy hangs above a chimneypiece from Ryan & Smith. STUDY A Sixties armchair by Kipp Stewart for Directional is covered in John Boyd Textiles' 'Selle II Stripe'. Silvio Cavatorta designed the Fifties lacquered desk





THIS PAGE FROM TOP In the open-plan kitchen, Fifties dining chairs by Edward J Wormley for Dunbar have been upholstered in BDDW's cotton 'Fabric #84'. Bryan collaborated with Rupert Bevan on the oak panelling, as well as kitchen units with handmade brass drawer fronts. OPPOSITE FROM TOP LEFT Signature Stairs built the staircase. The Plaster Collective applied a patinated finish to the walls of the dining room, which features klismos chairs and an ikat rug. Bryan used two ikat fabrics in the adjacent snug: Robert Kime's ['Andijan?'] for the walls and 'Solola' by A Rum Fellow for the curtains. The dining room's early-19th-century Irish chimneypiece is from Jamb

You can frame a story in any number of ways. Take the interior of this early 19th-century terraced house in one of London's smartest postcodes, designed by Bryan O'Sullivan. It could be described in terms of its spatial and architectural merit: how original features were researched and sensitively reinstated, while new floors and half-floors were created with confidence and ingenuity. Built as four storeys, including a basement, the house has grown over the years and now has a mansard roof, an extension and, more recently, an additional basement level. There have been bold choices, such as the central skylit void, which houses a winding staircase and marks the meeting point of old house and modern addition. Before working for the likes of David Collins, Martin Brudnizki and Luis Laplace, the Irish designer, who founded his eponymous interiors studio in 2013, studied architecture in London, where he is now based.

Another tack might be to see the house as the apotheosis of an evolving partnership between designer and client, which has developed over multiple projects in Paris, New York and Dublin. And very design-minded the clients are. 'They always come to the table with ideas,' he says. 'So, in many ways, it's an opportunity for me to consider things I might not have come up with on my own.' Though this is not their only home, this collaborative process has allowed it to be decorated and filled in a way that gives a feeling of permanency and personality, rather than simply of convenience and comfort.

Instead, let us look at this house as a celebration of materials and texture and how they can do more than just intrigue the eye of the beholder. When chosen judiciously – yet with flair – these can dictate the character of a room, influence the mood of its inhabitants and change the way sound travels within the space. It is one of the defining qualities of the house and is at its most tangible in the basement immediately below the ground floor.

The kitchen is at the back of this big, bright area, and it is a glorious melange of materials concocted in collaboration with the bespoke furniture maker Rupert Bevan. Woven and mesh brass have been used on drawer and cupboard fronts, while the same metal creates a mottled effect on the kitchen island. The pocket doors of a built-in larder are clad in white plaster and work beautifully with the honed Serpeggiante Avorio marble floors and Calacatta marble worksurfaces. Elsewhere there is oak, stained grey on the wall cupboards and sand-blasted on



SITTING ROOM Mid-century pieces in this room include a Jean Royère 'Antibes' **floor lamp** and a walnut and glass **coffee table** designed by Terence Harold Robsjohn-Gibbings. The handmade 'Chenille Flocchetti' **rug** is from FJ Hakimian. On the right, a Fifties French ceramic **table lamp** from Antony Todd stands on a marble-topped Seventies Belgian **console table** from 88 Gallery. On the wall is a hand-coloured **etching** by Louise Bourgeois. The Crittall **doors** lead to a sunken terrace with a living wall of plants





MAIN BEDROOM Bryan designed the **bed**, which was made by Dudgeon Sofas and upholstered in George Spencer Designs' 'Mia' wool in ice blue. He also devised a set of freestanding **drawers**, which sits under a Renzo Rutili **bedside table** from 1964 and was painted to match the grain of the wood exactly by the decorative artist Henry Van de Vijver. DRESSING ROOM Bespoke joinery designed by Bryan's studio was clad in **shagreen** by Simon Orrell Designs. BATHROOM The floor and walls are clad in bookmatched Arni Fantastico Verde Viola **marble** from McMarmilloyd. [The '**Rockwell Bath With Feet**' is from The Water Monopoly?]

the island. Yet the scheme retains a simplicity; it is modern with artisan flourishes. Through Crittall doors, which open onto a sunken terrace, can be seen a variegated living wall covered with plants.

Moving towards the front of the house, past the new central staircase and up a few steps, we are back within the original footprint of the building. The ceiling is much lower here due to planning constraints, and it is not a space blessed with much natural light. This inspired the distinct change in decorative mood.

'We decided not to fight the character of the space,' says Bryan. 'It is a cosy, cocooning area, so we have played to its strengths.' A dining area has patinated grey-green plaster walls and there is a richness to the pieces that fill it, from the Siena-marble-faced 18th-century [repro?] chimneypiece to the Greek Revival klismos chairs and silk ikat rug [chk?] on herringbone-laid wooden floors. A blackened steel architrave along the top of this and the adjacent room adds a cool, contemporary touch.

Through pocket doors is a densely patterned snug with walls covered in a distinctive Robert Kime silk ikat fabric in burnt umber and black, colours that echo those of the rug next door. These are teamed with ikat curtains and furniture covered in moss-green velvet and colourful zig-zags. Even more striking than the combination of fabrics is the way the upholstered walls seem to mute the room: their enveloping effect befits the word snug.

There is a controlled glamour to Bryan's work, which makes sense considering his pedigree. In this house, it is partly expressed with Sixties and Seventies Italian pieces, but it can also be seen in the shagreen-clad joinery in the dressing room, the main bedroom's scalloped headboard and the decadent use of marble in one of the bathrooms.

He is generous in his acknowledgement of how all his former bosses have influenced him. 'I've taken different elements from each,' he explains. 'David Collins had an incredible eye for details and introduced me to some of his references, such as Jacques Adnet. Martin Brudnizki is now a friend and taught me that being a good boss gets the best out of people. And the staircase in this house is very much in Annabelle Selldorf's language.' Yet with multiple residential and commercial projects on the go - including three suites at Claridge's and bars at The Connaught and The Berkeley - Bryan has plenty of opportunities to display a fluency in the design language his own studio has developed □

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Bryan O'Sullivan Studio: bos-studio.com

